

# Chapter 2

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### INTRODUCTION

This section defines the role of the Hoosier National Forest and outlines goals set for the Forest. The role identifies the Hoosier's niche as a national forest in south-central Indiana and how the Forest intends to care for the land while serving the people.

### ROLE OF THE FOREST

National forests have many inherent values that contribute to the quality of life of the American people. Air quality, cave systems, heritage resources, minerals, natural areas, recreation opportunities, scenery, soil, terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, timber, water, and wilderness all contribute to the values that people expect to find on their national forests. The USDA Forest Service has the responsibility of managing the Hoosier to provide natural resources in a combination that best meets the needs of people now and in the future. The Hoosier provides leadership in natural resource management.

The Forest comprises much of the public forest land in Indiana. As a result, it continues to be at the forefront of forest management issues. As one of the largest public land holders in the State, the Hoosier plays a major role in providing forest ecosystems that enhance biological diversity on a regional scale and high quality recreation opportunities. Management for large, linked, natural-forest ecosystems and native plant and animal communities provides biological diversity, including genetic diversity and ecological processes, not found in other areas.

Part of the Forest Service's role is providing leadership in working with state agencies, other Federal agencies, and private landowners to link together forest ecosystems on a larger landscape level. No other area in Indiana, and few in the Midwest, offers such an opportunity to restore a portion of the forest ecosystems that were once extensive in this region.

The Forest is a precious asset to the public. Each decision the Forest makes with the public demonstrates our commitment to enhancing the character of southern Indiana and accepting our supporting role in local communities. The Hoosier has worked with the public to develop a shared vision of how the Forest should be managed and keeps them involved in deciding what path the national forest should take.

The Forest can provide natural resources, biological diversity, recreational opportunities, and other commodities society has come to expect from the Forest. The Forest's staff is committed to helping people understand why NFS lands are managed and making them partners in management decisions. Our mission is to continue to make it possible for people

to enjoy the values and benefits through responsible resource management tailored to meet public desires.

## **GOALS**

The following eight goals present broad statements of the overall purpose of the Forest.

### **Conservation of Threatened and Endangered Species Habitat**

The Hoosier will aid in delisting endangered and threatened species, maintain an array of habitats to meet the needs of a variety of species, and potentially prevent the need to list additional sensitive species. The Forest is committed to the conservation and recovery of threatened, endangered, and proposed species and their habitats. As a Forest, we consistently put a high value on the restoration and recovery of native plant and wildlife species and the protection and conservation of those species that most need help to ensure they continue to be a viable component of the Hoosier National Forest.

In cooperation with the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service and appropriate State agencies, the Forest has established management objectives, including mitigating measures, for conservation of these species. This Plan fulfills Endangered Species Act Section 7(a)(1) obligations for conservation of Federally listed threatened, endangered, and proposed species. The basic objective is to design projects in a manner that ensures management activities will not adversely affect habitat of threatened or endangered species.

#### **Objective**

- Maintain, protect, or improve the habitat for threatened and endangered species by working toward the goals and objectives of Federal recovery plans and management direction in the Forest Plan.

### **Maintain and Restore Sustainable Ecosystems**

The Forest recognizes the inherent value of evolving natural in the area it manages. Their variety adds value to our lives and reflects the power and permanence of our natural world. These ecosystems are a barometer of the quality of land management. Ecosystems, with their natural variety of species, genetic make-up, and ecological processes, are key to providing the diversity needed to be resilient in the face of environmental disturbances. To be sustainable, each ecosystem must include viable populations of its component species. The Forest intends to maintain and restore individual communities within the ecological capabilities of the landscape.

This goal includes restoration and maintenance of plant and wildlife species and their habitat components. All ecosystems will be recognized and enhanced, based on site capabilities. The capabilities of each site will be identified at a site-specific level and the basic integrity of air, soil, and water resources protected.

Some components of this goal are:

- Emphasize native plant and animal species and communities in management.
- Develop and maintain stands of the appropriate composition and structure to meet management goals; and when possible, provide for interconnecting corridors.
- Use vegetation management to perpetuate and enhance biological diversity. Intersperse vegetative types to provide viable habitat for native species.
- Protect cave resources from potential surface and subterranean impacts.
- Protect areas that have significant natural characteristics or represent relatively undisturbed examples of important forest ecosystems.
- Emphasize prevention and control in the integrated pest management program through appropriate means.
- Use prescribed fire to maintain fire-adapted ecosystems, to promote a more diverse community of plants and animals, and to manage accumulated fuels.
- Control and prevent the spread of nonnative invasive species.

### **Objectives**

- Provide the diversity of habitats needed for viable populations of all native and desired nonnative species.
- Use prescribed fire to restore ecological processes and provide habitat for RFSS and other wildlife and plant species. A minimum of five prescribed burns will occur in barrens communities (average of one site every other year).
- Benefit RFSS by improving hydrologic connectivity of aquatic ecosystems by improving stream crossing structures to assure passage of water, sediment, nutrients, wood, invertebrates, fish, and to facilitate freshwater mussel dispersal. Restore up to 10 (average of one site per year) stream crossings.
- Cooperate with adjacent landowners, towns, state agencies, and private organizations to prevent the spread and establishment of non-native invasive species that pose a risk to native ecosystems.
- Develop conservation assessments for sensitive species within five years of listing.

## **Maintain and Restore Watershed Health**

The goal of watershed health reaffirms the historic mission of the Hoosier for watershed protection and restoration. The driving force for establishing the Hoosier was to stabilize and restore eroding lands and protect watersheds from sediment. This goal emphasizes collaborative stewardship of watersheds and interrelated biological, economic, and social factors that affect these areas. The Forest will contribute to the restoration of water quality and soil productivity to improve the condition of those watersheds impacted by past land use practices.

## **Protect our Cultural Heritage**

The goal is to protect significant heritage resources, to share their values with the American people, and to contribute relevant information and perspectives to natural resource management.

Some components of this goal are:

- Stewardship emphasizes protection of heritage resources including identification, evaluation, preservation, scientific investigation, interpretation, and proactive law enforcement.
- Interprets a variety of sites for the public to bring the past alive and illustrate relevance to the issues and challenges of today and the future.
- Provide opportunities for recreation experiences, public education, development of a conservation ethic, and an appreciation of common links with the past.
- Integrate historical and cultural data at the landscape level to provide context for natural resource management.

## **Provide for Visually Pleasing Landscape**

Emphasize natural-appearing landscapes, with attention given to views from roads, trails, and high use areas. Visual quality will be considered in all management activities.

To the extent possible, Forest management activities, roads, and facilities are to blend with their settings. With design, timing, and care, minimal disturbance and disruption of the natural setting will occur. Long-term visual goals are not necessarily negated by short-term disruption of visual character.

## **Provide for Recreation Use in Harmony with Natural Communities**

The Forest provides an opportunity for outdoor recreational experiences consistent with protection of the Forest's natural resources.

The Forest fills a much-needed niche in Indiana by offering recreational experiences not readily available or otherwise in short supply such as long distance trails, wilderness, water-based, and dispersed.

The recreation program strives to provide a range of opportunities from wilderness to developed recreation areas.

Some components of this goal are:

- Provide a trail system for use by hikers, mountain bikers, and horse riders.
- Create and maintain a variety of dispersed and developed recreational opportunities.
- Protect and enhance wilderness values.

## **Provide a Useable Landbase**

The Forest strives to provide a landbase for biological diversity, recreational opportunities, and management efficiency. National Forest System land will be identifiable by the public.

The Forest will strive to provide public access. We are committed to an acquisition and exchange program to consolidate NFS lands, to resolve encroachments, and to protect significant cultural resources, areas of historical interest, and unusual habitats.

## **Provide for Human and Community Development**

The Forest meets certain individual, community, and national needs such as clean water, minerals, recreation, timber, and wilderness values. The knowledge that the forest is there and that natural wild places are preserved and available is important to many people, whether or not they ever visit the Hoosier.

The Forest contributes to local economies and provides commodities, products, and services to people and local communities.

Some components of this goal are:

- Reduce wildfire risk to communities, municipal water supplies, and at-risk Federal land.
- Provide interpretive services to enhance the visitor's experience, to assist with management issues, or to protect forest resources whenever possible.
- Provide for a balance of forest products within the capabilities of the ecosystems.
- Support regional tourism development.

This page left blank